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MIDDLE EAST – AFRICA – SOUTH ASIA

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CONTENTS



25X

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Rhodesia: White Farmers Probe for ANC | |
| Policies on Land | 3 |

Apr 25, 1975

SECRET

25X6

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Next 1 Page(s) In Document Exempt

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SECRET

Rhodesia

White Farmers Probe for ANC Policies on Land

Two white Rhodesian farmers visited Zambia in early April and apparently asked President Kaunda for some assurance that black Rhodesian nationalists would not expropriate white farms in the event the black majority gains political power. The approach to Kaunda suggests new flexibility among at least some of the white farmers, the mainstay of Prime Minister Ian Smith's ruling Rhodesian Front Party. The white farmers have adamantly opposed a negotiated transition to majority rule.

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two white members of the Rhodesian Farmers' Union told Kaunda on April 8 that the leadership of the union was prepared to switch support from the Rhodesian Front to the African National Council--the umbrella black nationalist organization--in return for a guarantee that the council, once in power, would permit white farmers to retain enough land for a livelihood. Kaunda reportedly relayed the white farmers' offer to Bishop Muzorewa and other leaders of the council who met Kaunda on their way home from the African foreign ministers' meeting in Dar es Salaam. Muzorewa reportedly said that he would bring the matter up when the council's executive meets in late April, and that the executive would formulate a land policy that might reassure the white farmers.

One of the white Rhodesians who met with Kaunda told journalists after he returned home that Kaunda had implied the leadership of the council might accept a gradual transition to majority rule. Kaunda had also said, however, that a commitment to the principle of majority rule was a prerequisite for a negotiated settlement. The white Rhodesian also told reporters in Salisbury that the confidential report of his meeting

(Continued)

Apr 25, 1975

3

SECRET

SECRET

with Kaunda--intended for leading white Rhodesians-- recommends acceptance of a gradual transition to majority rule. The white Rhodesian claimed that some 70 percent of the "farming leadership"-- apparently the white officials of the Rhodesian Farmers' Union--were prepared to accept such a commitment to majority rule.

We question whether such a large number of white Rhodesian farmers will openly call for even a gradual transition to majority rule, or that significant numbers will ever desert the Rhodesian Front for the African National Council. Some farmers, however, may be coming around to accept a negotiated settlement that may eventually result in majority rule. They may regard this as a lesser evil than facing the prospect of a resurgence of guerrilla warfare without further support from South Africa, which reportedly plans to withdraw its police from Rhodesia by the end of May. A few days before the two farmers met with Kaunda, Smith acknowledged that pressure from Pretoria had induced him to release from detention temporarily Ndabaningi Sithole, a nationalist leader who had brought his group into the African National Council under pressure from Kaunda and other African mediators. (SECRET/NO FOREIGN DISSEM)

25X1A

4

Apr 25, 1975

SECRET